

Westminster Lectures

THE FREEDOM OF  
THE WILL

BY

REV. A. B. SHARPE, M.A.

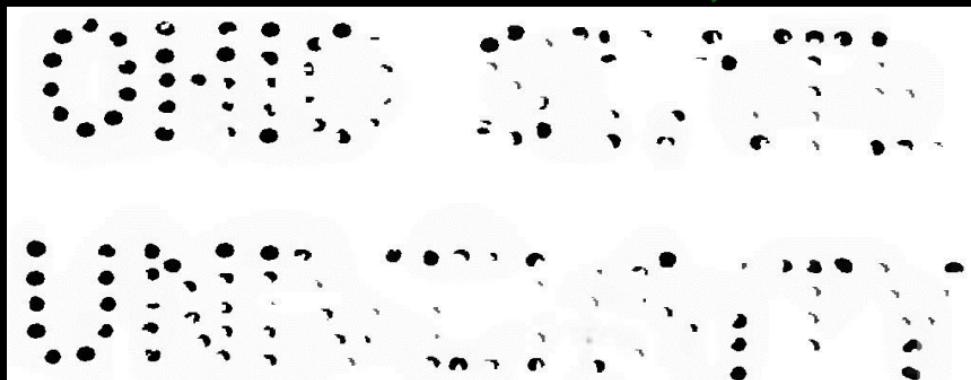
BJ1460  
S53

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY.

PRESENTED BY

Newman Club of  
Ohio State University.

WESTMINSTER  
LECTURES  
EDITED BY REV. FRANCIS  
AVELING, D.D.  
THE FREEDOM OF THE  
WILL  
BY THE  
REV. A. B. SHARPE, M. A.



LONDON AND  
EDINBURGH SANDS &  
COMPANY ST LOUIS,

MO.

B. HERDER,  
17 SOUTH BROADWAY  
1905



## PREFACE

THE peculiar difficulty which attends the consideration of the Will, with regard to its freedom or determination, lies in the fact that the subject is merely a division of a much larger one, and cannot be satisfactorily discussed without some attention to questions in which the Will is not directly concerned. The precise view which is taken of freewill and necessity must always depend mainly on the general principles of







# THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL

WE may consider the Will from two distinct points of view. One is that of the philosopher, who seeks to determine what its nature and action are in themselves; the other is that of the theologian, who desires to gain some idea of its relation to the supreme will of God.

It is to the former aspect of the subject—the philosophical—that interest is chiefly directed at the present day. For the





Though I shall have a word to say on the theological question, I do not intend to discuss it at length, for the reasons I have given.

I would first of all remind you that the Council of Trent [*Sess. vi. can. 5.*] has defined the freedom of the Will to be of faith. Those therefore who accept the authority of the Catholic Church as final are bound to this conclusion. But no theory on the subject has ever been imposed by the Church as authoritative; and consequently, so long as we hold the Will to be free we are at liberty to









































(as happily those who hold Determinist principles seldom are), would be esteemed among human beings precisely as it is by the occupants of a farmyard. It is difficult indeed to see how society could continue in anything like its present form, if mankind once gave up its belief in freewill. The interest of life would assuredly have vanished—the springs of feeling, which are the motive power of action, would have been dried up at their source. I do not deny that a new basis for quasi-moral











difficult to believe that we are universally mistaken. This something is the sense of effort which more often than not accompanies choice; and the effort itself is by no means physical, though it is often associated with physical effort, but purely mental. It would seem that our idea of freedom depends in the last resort on this feeling of effort, of which we are aware in much the same way as that in which we are aware of our own existence and personal identity. From this consciousness we infer that we are



reality of the intuition upon which it depends.

Accordingly, it is here that the Determinist argument joins issue. Nature, we are told, has played a trick upon mankind something like that which conjurors call “forcing” a card. The conjuror invites one of his audience to choose a card from the pack which is held out to him: he chooses one, as he thinks, freely; but in fact he takes the one which the conjuror intends him to take, and he is really unable to choose any other. The difference, however,

between the two cases is this. The conjuror can and does tell us how his trick is performed; in fact, we only believe in the trick because we are shown “how it’s done”; whereas the Determinist argument fails at precisely this point. It assures us that we are the victims of a trick, but tells us nothing of the method by which Nature, the conjuror, has succeeded in taking us all in.

What we are told is this. Everything has a cause, and that cause is external to itself; nothing, so far as we have any evidence, is





































inconceivable. I do not say, it must be observed, that the Will is uncaused; but that there is no necessity of thought which compels us to think of everything as caused by something else; there must be one thing at least which is not so caused.

4. But the foundation of the Determinist argument is the assumption that the Will necessarily acts under the influence of the strongest motive. This sounds well; but a very little consideration will show that the assumption is entirely baseless. What















contributing whatever it is that constitutes the motive and regulates its strength, or are free to give or withhold it at our choice. But if we invest external objects, or our ideas of them, with the character of motives by any necessary and so to speak automatic process, such as the attraction of a particular character by a particular idea, then the Will is dominated by the motive, and both by the nature of things; Will and motive cohere like two bubbles which meet on the surface of a stream, both of them















philosophy of the Will in a nutshell.

Thus it is evident that the Will necessarily follows the motive that is for it identified with good. Its freedom consequently must lie in a power of so identifying, or refusing to identify motives with the good to which it is determined. But we must remember that the Will and the intellect are distinct faculties, and have their distinct functions (though it is probable that both are necessary factors of the ego, or personality, so that neither can be at

















motives, the result in that case being the perception of what under the circumstances is truly the best: the judgement is then in accordance with the actual facts. When the Will is perverse, the intellect judges hastily or partially; and its verdict is then likely to be out of harmony with the realities of the case. Thus the pleasures of sin may be chosen freely if attention is withheld from its consequences:

*[Compare St Thomas's account of the sin of the fallen angels. They sinned*



rejecting it. "We needs must love the highest, *when we see it*" — so Lord Tennyson's King Arthur sums up the distinguishing features of all right action — perhaps with greater scientific accuracy than his literary creator intended.

The great merit that I would claim for this account of the Will's operation is that it explains all the facts for which explanation is required.

1. The sense of effort which accompanies choice is obviously caused by the force, greater or less, which the Will applies to the

intellect when it compels it to consider further motives, while already under the influence of an affective desire for one, which, of course, may be either action of some kind or a refusal to act at all. Thus by a *strong* Will is to be understood one which forces the intellect to keep in view the remoter, but possibly most important aspects of its motives, in spite of the affection which the more obvious ones excite in it. A *weak* Will is one which is readily attracted by the more obvious motives, and so





















relations with Divine power.

Two difficulties occur in respect of these relations.

1. God is omnipotent and omniscient, and all things must consequently be foreordained by Him from eternity. If this is so, how can the human Will be free? If all its actions are already determined, and their results known and woven into the great scheme of creation, they must, it is sometimes thought, be necessary in the same way as the growth of a vegetable or the actions of solid bodies.

under the law of gravitation.

But the answer is a fairly simple one. The free actions of the Will are foreseen and allowed for; they and their results are present to the Divine mind beforehand, and so enter into what we may call its calculations. It is not, however, strictly correct to speak of God's foreknowledge simply, as if it in any way resembled that foreknowledge which is occasionally possible with human beings. The Divine mind acts in eternity, not merely in









which are lawfully held in the Church. It is easy enough, however, to arrive at a general conclusion, which will be sufficient for most people. If the Will is essentially free, it is certain that it must normally be so, whether influenced by Divine grace or not; and we need not wonder if we are unable to define precisely the mode in which Almighty God chooses to assist the Will without prejudicing its freedom; since, if that is the case, the operation of Divine grace only shares that obscurity in which the great majority



## APPENDIX I

OF the numerous questions asked at the close of the foregoing lecture, very few bore directly on the subject to which it was confined; for the most part the questions dealt with problems arising out of the subject, and of great interest and importance in themselves, but not properly falling within the limits of a lecture on the freedom of the Will.

It would be merely tedious to reproduce the individual questions and





















reconciliation of the existence of evil with the justice and goodness of the Creator. For if the Will were determined, its choice of evil would be directly due to the Divine Will, instead of being at most indirectly due to it.

Secondly, it would be subversive of our necessary conception of a Divine Creator to suppose that the freewill of man can be a disturbing force in the order and harmony in which the goodness of the universe consists, and by means of which it is a worthy object of the Divine





## APPENDIX 2

A GENERAL view of the subject may be gathered from the following works:—

Aquinas, St Thomas—  
*Summa Theologica*  
(especially I. QQ. 82, 83).

Aquinas, St Thomas—  
*Summa Contra Gentiles*  
(especially II. 66, and III. 1, 2).

Augustine, St—*De Dono Perseverantiae.*

Augustine, St—*De Correptione et Gratia.*

Augustine, St—*De Prcedestinatione Sanctorum.*



*Reason.*

Locke—*Essay on the Human Understanding.*

Molina—*Liberi Arbitrii cum Gratice Donis . . . Concordia.*

Mozley, J. B.—*The Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination.* Pascal—*Provincial Letters.*

Sanseverino—*Philosopkia Christiana.*

Spencer, Herbert—*Principles of Psychology.*

Ward, W. G.—*Essays on the Philosophy of Theism.*

PRINTED BY OLIVER  
AND BOYD  
EDINBURGH

BJ 1460

77280

S53

Sharpe, A.B.

The freedom

BJ 1460

77280

S53

The Ohio State University



3 2435 00180 1158  
BJ1460S53 001  
THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY BOOK DEPOSITORY



D AISLE SECT SHLF SIDE POS ITEM C  
8 08 20 14 8 11 004 6